Rossini in South America

Benjamin Walton

In the preface to his *Annals of Opera, 1597-1940*, Alfred Loewenberg explained his scholarly approach. ‘There are no descriptions of plots’, he wrote, ‘no musical analyses, no personal critical comments. The facts are to speak for themselves, and every care has been taken to verify them so that they may serve as a safe ground on which to build a real history of opera, yet to be written.’[[1]](#footnote-1) Given that the book goes on to list well over three thousand works in chronological order of their premieres, the full scope of this history might seem hard to imagine, but the information provided for each entry does nevertheless suggest what the priorities of such a project might be. Each piece in the *Annals* is listed by date, composer and title, together with place of first performance, number of acts and librettist; most then receive a sentence or two of description, sometimes more (and not always as critically neutral as the author’s opening remarks imply).

The bulk of each entry, however, and of Loewenberg’s painstaking research, is taken up with a digest of later performances by location. And so the picture that emerges across the book is of a vibrant and widely dispersed network of operatic activity, of a sort only passingly glimpsed in histories dominated by canonical works and their famous creators. Forgotten pieces and composers, some overwhelmingly popular in their time, jostle for attention with more familiar repertory, while reception patterns hint at the different routes taken to reach such familiarity. If all this were to contribute to a ‘real’ history, it is one that would clearly move well beyond the traditional purview of operatic scholarship.

But how? And in which direction? If we were to turn, say, to Nicolas Isouard’s *Le Prince de Catane* and François-Adrien Boieldieu’s *Le Nouveau Seigneur de Village*, both premiered at the Opéra Comique in Paris in 1813, what might we then do with the information that a revival of the first took place in Graz, in German, in November 1826, or that the second appeared in January 1840 at the Drury Lane Theatre in London, adapted by G. Dance with the title *My Lord is Not My Lord*? Perhaps one could imagine a study of early 19th-century opera in Austro-Germany which would take seriously the ubiquity of semi-naturalised French opéra comique at the time, or an account of developing ideas of operatic canon in mid-19th-century London that paid as much attention to revivals and adaptations as to first performances.[[2]](#footnote-2)

A different topic keeps intruding, however, while leafing through these early 19th-century pages of Loewenberg’s hefty tome. A few years after that performance at Drury Lane, for example, we read that Boieldieu’s work surfaced in Rio de Janeiro, and by 1849 it was also in New York. Other operas premiered around the same time travelled much faster: Boieldieu’s previous opera, *Jean de Paris* (1812), took just seven years to get from Paris to New Orleans. One approach to piecing together a ‘real’ operatic history for this period, in other words, would be to take the expansive geographical ambit of opera revealed by Loewenberg as an invitation to account for the striking increase of operatic performances beyond Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century. Who took *Jean de Paris* to New Orleans? How was it received? Where was it staged?[[3]](#footnote-3)

These are, of course, the same questions that could be asked of any of the performances listed; yet I would argue that the more unfamiliar the location as a site of operatic performance in a given period, the more pressing – and intriguing – the questions become. We might imagine (rightly or wrongly) that we can guess something about a French opera performed in Austria at this time, but points of reference within general operatic history are considerably scarcer when it comes to performances across the Atlantic, or, say, in the Dutch East Indies (*Le Nouveau Seigneur*, Surabaya, December 1867).[[4]](#footnote-4)

Such reflections lead inexorably to the music of Rossini. The famous opening sentence of Stendhal’s 1824 biography defined the composer’s renown through its geographical extent, both within Europe (Paris, Naples, Vienna, London, St Petersburg) and also beyond, in Calcutta. A memorable opening gambit, yet the description was not original, having been adapted from Giuseppe Carpani, who also cast the composer as the ‘Anson’ of music, his melodies traversing the globe like Commodore George Anson, the famous 18th-century circumnavigator.[[5]](#footnote-5) For both writers, the imagery was intentionally hyperbolic, but – as Loewenberg’s lists suggest – it would become more accurate than either might have guessed at the time: within a few years, Rossini could indeed lay claim to the title of the first world-famous operatic composer.

There is no need to move beyond Loewenberg’s entries for 1813, the year of *Le Prince de Catane* and *Le Nouveau Seigneur*, to underline the point. This was also the year of the premieres in Venice of *Tancredi* and *L’italiana in Algeri* (not to mention, at least for now, *Il signor Bruschino* and *Aureliano in Palmira*). Over the next decades, both these pieces reached New York – many years before *Le Nouveau Seigneur* – as well as Philadelphia, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile and Lima. And elsewhere, too: *L’italiana*, for instance, made it to Calcutta and Constantinople; and even to Algeria itself, where the work was staged in Oran in 1842.[[6]](#footnote-6) The clear focus of this brief list, however, lies within the Americas, and it is here that any attempt to trace the lineaments of the operatic world in the first half of the 19th century must therefore begin. For the purposes of this article, meanwhile, I will limit myself still more, to performances in two of the Latin American locations listed above, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, together with the capital of Uruguay, Montevideo.[[7]](#footnote-7) Taken together, these three interlinked locations can function as a single case study for beginning to think about Rossini beyond Europe.

Given the extensive history of European attempts to cast themselves as pioneers in the Americas, I should stress that what follows is by no means all an exploration of untrodden ground. Loewenberg’s book was itself published well over half a century ago, as were some of the key texts devoted to collating operatic and other musical activities in South America specifically; recent research has in some instances expanded this knowledge significantly.[[8]](#footnote-8) Not all of this scholarship has received sustained attention outside of its country of origin, however, and much tends to stay within national boundaries, with the result that connections between one place and another are rarely pursued. As a result, the intention of this article is twofold: to synthesise relevant existing literature, and to add to it wherever possible, in pursuit of a clearer picture of Rossini’s place in the musical cultures of South America during the 1820s and 30s.

With this in mind, I have restricted myself as far as possible here to information directly pertaining to the works of the composer, whether performances in or outside an opera house, or discussions of his music or life in the local press. Much, as a result, will go unsaid, whether details about theatres, performers or wider contexts, and the risk therefore arises of replicating Carpani’s Ansonian fantasy of Rossini’s music floating freely over the oceans, carried along by no more than the power of its own melodic agency. The risk is significant, and I would even argue that the sort of focus on a single composer offered here is not how the history of touring opera troupes in the Americas should ultimately be told. The ‘real’ (or, in Richard Taruskin’s definition, ‘realist’) history involves singers and journalists, agents and audiences, together with everyone else typically rendered peripheral by our continued fascination with the operatic work.[[9]](#footnote-9) In these terms, Rossini’s music itself might seem to become secondary, played so much in South America simply because it was the most obvious repertoire to take on a voyage across the Atlantic in its time. Yet things are never so simple: the music took on meanings of its own once performed in new locations, while the mythology of the composer – and the level of his popularity in Europe – came to shape his new reception. And to understand these complexities, we need to start by following in Loewenberg’s steps: to lay out the ‘safe ground’ pertaining to composer and works, as a basis on which to shape the larger stories that in future we might want to tell.

\*\*\*

*Rio de Janeiro*

On 1 August 1819, Theodor von Leithold, a Prussian cavalry officer, left Hamburg to seek his fortune in Brazil. Hoping to set up as a coffee farmer, he lasted only four months in the country before returning disillusioned to Europe, arriving back in June 1820. Later that year, both von Leithold and the nephew who had accompanied him, Ludwig von Rango, published narratives of their voyage, including impressions of the capital city, Rio de Janeiro, and of the city’s theatre, the Real Teatro de São João.[[10]](#footnote-10) This was a grand edifice, built to replace the much smaller house that had sufficed before the arrival – in their thousands – of the Portuguese royal court and retinue in March 1808, in flight from Napoleon’s troops in Lisbon. The new building, seating around 1,200 people, opened in October 1813, and was modeled on Lisbon’s São Carlos.[[11]](#footnote-11) Von Leithold records that during his stay there were four or five performances a week, and that comedies, dramas and tragedies in Portuguese shared the stage with Italian operas. On several occasions, he writes, the opera performed was *Tancredi*, at this point less than seven years after its Italian premiere.[[12]](#footnote-12) No specific dates are given, nor is there anything in his account (or in that of von Rango, who also mentions the piece) to clarify whether these were the first times that the work had appeared at the theatre. The brief references are nonetheless significant, marking the first known appearances of Rossini’s operas outside Europe.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The performances themselves seem to have been less momentous: Leithold goes on to say that he ‘almost did not recognize’ the work, ‘because it was so terribly cut and ruined by the bad orchestra’; Rango, meanwhile, describes the singing as ‘beneath all description’.[[14]](#footnote-14) Both nevertheless praised the young soprano playing Amenaide, Maria Teresa Fasciotti, and Leithold described the performance by Madame Sabini of Tancredi’s famous opening words, ‘O patria’, as sung with such expression that he could not hold back his tears, and had to leave his box.[[15]](#footnote-15) As a consequence, while their accounts are tinged with the condescension familiar from much travel literature of the period – von Rango is quick to assert that ‘the locals do not have any judgment about art’ – they provide a more nuanced glimpse than found in some other accounts; a glimpse all the more precious at a time before detailed reviews had started to appear in the local press.

The vast majority of references to opera at this period in Rio’s newspapers appear instead as advertisements, and from these it seems that *Tancredi* was performed twice more in June 1821, and twice in October 1822.[[16]](#footnote-16) The same period also saw productions of *Aureliano in Palmira* (first recorded performance in April 1820), *La Cenerentola* (February 1821), *Il barbiere* (July 1821), *L’italiana* (November 1821)[[17]](#footnote-17) and *Elisabetta* (December 1822); an eruption of Rossini, in other words, that largely eclipsed the earlier repertoire at the theatre. Then, on 25 March 1824, the theatre burnt down, and full operatic performances gave way to concerts made up of selections, until the new theatre, the Teatro São Pedro de Alcântara, opened in early 1826, again with a performance of *Tancredi*. The second half of the decade saw the introduction of *L’inganno felice* (August 1826), *La pietra del paragone* (October 1826), *Matilde di Shabran* (January 1829), *La gazza ladra* (October 1830), and perhaps *Adelaide di Borgogna*, *Otello*, *Adina* and *Il turco in Italia*.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Across the entire period, the works most frequently performed seem to have been *Aureliano* and *L’italiana*, followed by *La Cenerentola* and *Il barbiere* [see Table 1]. But there were undoubtedly many more performances than those advertised or reviewed, as is clear from comments within reviews. Possibly there were more works too: Carl Schlichthorst, another German traveler who spent time in Rio a few years after von Leithold and von Rango, mentioned that *Tancredi*, *Aureliano in Palmira* and *Semiramide* ‘were done to death’ at the theatre.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Sure enough, the list of performances for the period indicates a small glut of *Aureliano*s during Schlichthorst’s stay, and a couple of *Tancredi*s; *Semiramide*, however, never surfaces at all in surviving documentation.[[20]](#footnote-20) His comments may have referred to excerpts alone, given that at least part of his residence in the city coincided with the period after the fire of 1824. Joseph von Weech, visiting at much the same time, recalled never hearing a full opera, but mostly single arias, including those from *Semiramide* performed by ‘old worn-out sopranos’.[[21]](#footnote-21) A newspaper report also records an unsuccessful attempt by a newly arrived singer, Margarita Caravaglia, to stage *Semiramide* in 1827 for her debut. This was blocked by the opera administration, on the grounds that the piece was unperformable in Rio; the critic judged the outcome ‘a sort of national service’, adding that any rendition of the piece ‘learnt hastily by our orchestra and sung by Caravaglia’ would send the audience running for the exit, and, furthermore, would endanger any pregnant women exposed to it.[[22]](#footnote-22)

The libelous tone of these remarks provides a flavour of one strand of the operatic criticism that started to appear in the lively local press in the years after the reopening of the theatre.[[23]](#footnote-23) Already in earlier times, advertisements had expanded beyond the simple provision of date, time and title: the first performance of *Il barbiere*, for instance, was puffed the previous day in the *Diario do Rio de Janeiro* as a composition ‘by the immortal Rossini, justly granted the name of the modern Orpheus: in the graciousness of the story of the drama, or in the sublimity, elegance and taste of the music, it is perhaps the best work yet to be performed on the stage’.[[24]](#footnote-24) But while such outpourings demonstrate the early presentation to the public in Rio of the composer as a genius, they still amount to no more than straightforward boilerplate. With the appearance of full reviews from 1826, however, it becomes possible not only to tot up advertised performances, but also to begin to fill in some of the contextual detail.

Three brief examples from 1827 can suffice to give an impression of the sort of information revealed on such matters as audience, acting and aesthetic preferences. A letter to *O Spectador brasileiro* in May expressed surprise at the indifference shown by the Rio public to the choruses in Rossini’s works; even those that were always applauded in Europe.[[25]](#footnote-25) A review of *Il barbiere* in *L’Indépendant* in June took the tenor in the role of Almaviva – Victor Isotta – to task for acting the part of a drunken soldier too convincingly in the Act 1 finale: ‘a grand lord, even disguised, must never resemble a tavern hero’.[[26]](#footnote-26) And a comment in the *Gaceta do Brasil* in November demonstrated the domination of Rossini’s music in the city, stating that two works by other composers had been performed in the past week, and that their music ‘confirms us in the opinion that the incomparable Rossini is the only Master’.[[27]](#footnote-27)

In all these ways, reviewers began to write Rossini in Rio into the wider operatic world, through measuring the performances they saw against standards elsewhere, and against other music on offer at the theatre. It was a different feature of local operatic life, however, which most strongly marked out these Brazilian performances from those anywhere else at the time: the survival – and flourishing – in Rio of the Rossinian castrato. As Alberto José Vieira Pacheco has shown, Italian castrati played a significant part in musical life in the city after the arrival of the Portuguese court: Pacheco lists ten singers who arrived between 1808 and 1820, mostly brought out from Lisbon by orders of the king for service in the royal chapel.[[28]](#footnote-28) A handful of them then also sang at the opera, and one, Giovanni Francesco Fasciotti, was a regular performer of Rossini throughout the 1820s.

This can help to explain the extraordinary fact that *Aureliano in Palmira*, the only opera that Rossini wrote for a castrato, Giambattista Velluti, may well have received more performances in Rio than anywhere else in the world. No great success at its La Scala premiere, it had a modest run of fourteen showings in its opening season in 1813, and although it was subsequently performed around the Italian circuit, Loewenberg mentions few productions further afield: Barcelona, 1822, Lisbon, 1824, and London (with Velluti) in 1826.[[29]](#footnote-29) Before any of these, it had already been staged in Rio, and a review from July 1827 claimed that the work had just been shown there for the thirtieth time.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Fasciotti had arrived in the city in 1816, and would be celebrated in 1837 as having brought to life on the Rio stage the combined voices of Catalani, Pasta, Malibran and Grisi.[[31]](#footnote-31) Aureliano was not his only Rossinian role: by 1821 he had also taken over from Madame Sabini in the title role of *Tancredi*, and he seems to have participated in the premiere of *Otello* in 1828 as well.[[32]](#footnote-32) Nor was he the only castrato to appear at the theatre: Pasquale and Marcelo Tanni, brothers from a family of Italian musicians and singers in Rio at the time, performed on stage in the late 1820s; earlier, Schlichthorst lists two others besides Fasciotti that he has witnessed there, and van Weech mentions ‘castrati’, in the plural, as singing *Tancredi* at the mid-decade concerts alongside the ‘worn-out sopranos’ he recalled doing bits of *Semiramide*.

The influence of Fasciotti in Rio, meanwhile, spread beyond his own roles. His sister, Maria Teresa – the Amenaide in Leithold’s account – became one of the directors of the opera company in 1822. She had been trained by her brother, and consequently seems to have adopted a similarly florid approach to operatic ornamentation. The critic in the *Indépendant* in June 1827 praised Giovanni’s performance in *Aureliano*, but expressed a wish that ‘just once’ he would sing Rossini’s music as it was written, rather than offering a ‘more or less successful’ mixture of the composer’s score and his own additions.[[33]](#footnote-33) The following month, in July, a review in *L’Echo de l’Amérique du Sud* accused his sister of ‘entirely altering the music of the divine maestro’ and adding that ‘if her abilities do not allow her to sing the music of Rossini as written, she should give up the role of Rosina to someone who could sing it’.

Such critical remarks set the stage for the debut two months later, on 21 September 1827, of the Paris Conservatoire-trained singer Elisa Barbieri as Isabella in *L’italiana*. The newcomer was in direct competition with the local favourite, and her presence sparked Rio’s first diva war, which then spread through the theatre, salons and newspapers for the rest of 1827 and into 1828, as partisan critics launched savage attacks against one or the other. But behind all the varied insults and allegations, it is hard not to perceive a basic musical confrontation between two ways of singing Rossini, old and new, in a way that pitted the long operatic tradition that had grown up in Rio since 1808 against the modern and less intrusive vocal dexterity of the new arrival, who, according to the *Echo*, ornamented only occasionally, and could apparently both act like a French woman and sing like an Italian.[[34]](#footnote-34)

At stake was a disagreement over the true sound of modern Rossinian opera, and such a controversy might seem an indication that by the later 1820s operatic performance in Rio had come of age. Not that there weren’t still European visitors willing to put the theatre back in its place as no more than an exotic outpost: Stendhal’s friend, Victor Jacquemont, for instance, attended a performance of *L’italiana* in 1828, presumably with Barbieri as Isabella, and commented only that ‘there is a fine theatre at Rio, where a detestable Italian company, with a still more execrable orchestra, murder Rossini three times a week’.[[35]](#footnote-35) Yet whatever the shortcomings, real or imagined, of individual performances, it is clear that at this point the extent of the composer’s Brazilian operatic naturalization went far beyond such glib summaries.

This is also evident beyond the sometimes minute detail of the debates over Barbieri and Fasciotti: small ads indicate that by this time music lovers in Rio had access to a wide selection of Rossini scores in arrangement,[[36]](#footnote-36) while some papers had also begun to pick up the sort of news of the composer’s activities found throughout the European press. In late 1828, for instance, the *Courrier du Brésil* reported that Rossini had spent May in the country outside Paris, working on the score of *Guillaume Tell*, and that a poem to his glory had just been published with the dedication ‘To the glory of the greatest maestro of Italy and of the world’.[[37]](#footnote-37) Meanwhile, a newspaper list of the songs and dances given at a grand ball in January 1830 is saturated with the composer’s music,[[38]](#footnote-38) and, according to the Brazilian musicologist Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo, overtures, arias and cavatinas of the composer’s operas were also being adapted for performances in churches; the impresario of the theatre, Pedro Teixeira, apparently made a speciality of putting together festival masses based on *Il barbiere*, *La gazza ladra*, or *La Cenerentola*.[[39]](#footnote-39) In the words of the critic of the *Courrier du Brésil*: ‘no one … would want to give up listening to the delicious music of Rossini’.[[40]](#footnote-40)

*Buenos Aires*

On the evening of 1 October 1822, while the patrons of the Teatro São João were attending a performance of *La Cenerentola*, a concert took place down the coast in Buenos Aires, capital of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, by this time six years on from establishing formal independence from Spain.[[41]](#footnote-41) The concert opened and closed with a song entitled ‘The Glory of Buenos Aires’, and in between the audience listened to a selection of vocal and instrumental pieces. These included a piano concerto by Dussek, an overture by Mozart, and also cavatinas from *L’italiana* and *Torvaldo e Dorliska*, and a cavatina and duet from *La gazza ladra*. Orchestral accompaniments were played at the piano by the 14-year-old Argentinian Juan Pedro Esnaola, who also supplied most of the vocal parts.

As the first recorded performance of Rossini in Buenos Aires, this might seem still less worth recalling than the 1819 production of *Tancredi* described by von Leithold and von Rango. Yet however unpromising the idea of a self-accompanied sing-through by a teenager might sound, in this case several factors marked out the event as significant even in its time. For one thing, the concert had been organized to celebrate the opening of a school of music, founded by Esnaola – no ordinary teenager, later to become a notable Argentinian composer and pillar of the musical establishment – and his uncle José Antonio Picasarri.[[42]](#footnote-42) As a result, the audience was decidedly select, and included both the Treasury Minister, and the Minister of Government, Bernardino Rivadavia, who in 1826 would be elected Argentina’s first president, and who was already a firm believer in introducing what he saw as civilized European values to the new republic. Hence the language of the review that appeared in the government newspaper, the *Argos de Buenos Aires*, which observed that those present listened in ‘profound silence’, and that on the evidence of the concert, the new school ‘should increase the civilization and culture of the family of the Americas’.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Esnaola had only recently returned from Paris (as had Rivadavia), where he had studied at the Conservatoire, and so it was unsurprising that Rossini’s music would be offered as the sound of contemporary European civilization. The following month, at the first concert given by the pupils of the new school, Esnaola performed again, this time singing an aria and one part in a duet from *Elisabetta*, and he returned to the stage to sing another pair of arias, including one from *La gazza ladra*, at a concert in January 1823, which also opened with an unnamed Rossini overture. Such Rossinian moments from around the same time could be multiplied – a concert by the recently formed Philharmonic Society in May 1823, for instance, included the quartet from *Mosè in Egitto*. And while any one such event might not have served to secure Rossini’s popularity, together they mark the beginning of a period which, as in Rio, would be entirely dominated by the composer’s music.

This was due less to Esnaola than to the Spanish violinist and singer Pablo Rosquellas, who in February 1823 arrived in Buenos Aires from Rio, where he had been living since 1818.[[44]](#footnote-44) Rosquellas may well have been responsible for bringing the scores of Rossini to Rio that generated the first productions at the Teatro São João, and on his arrival in Buenos Aires he arranged to give some performances at that city’s much less impressive theatre, the Coliseo Provisional.[[45]](#footnote-45) Together with a small group of singers, Rosquellas took the stage on 28 February, after a spoken comedy, and performed extracts from *Il barbiere*, in Italian and in costume. ‘At last in Buenos Aires, we have heard something that approximates to the perfection of singing, and that gives a complete idea of the beauty of Italian music’, wrote the appreciative reviewer in *El Centinela*.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Whether or not this was true, the audience response was enough to persuade Rosquellas to return to Rio in March to fetch another singer – the buffo bass Michele Vaccani – as well as the French dancer José Maria Toussaint. More bits of *Il barbiere* were staged, along with parts from *Tancredi* and *La Cenerentola*, and extracts by other composers. The critic in *El Centinela* was again full of praise, and stressed, in similar terms to those of the *Argos* on Esnaola, that they demonstrated a new level of taste to surpass anything previously staged in the city.[[47]](#footnote-47) Once the theatre in Rio burnt down in 1824, Rosquellas coaxed down still more singers, this time members of the same Tanni family who had provided the Rio opera with one of its castrati.[[48]](#footnote-48) And over a year later, once Rosquellas had taken over as impresario of the theatre, and after many more Rossinian excerpts had been performed between acts of spoken plays (from *Il barbiere*, *Cenerentola*, *L’inganno felice*, *Bianca e Faliero*, *L’italiana*, *Elisabetta*, and *Armida*), the first complete opera to be performed in Buenos Aires was finally produced, accompanied by an orchestra of 28: inevitably, it was *Il barbiere di Siviglia*.

 All these events leading up to this first full production are key to the spread of Rossini’s music spread beyond Europe, despite remaining hidden away behind the headline dates of local premieres. The first performance of *Il barbiere*, on 27 September 1825, for instance, appears chronologically about halfway through Loewenberg’s three-page entry on the work, slotted in between premieres in Pressburg (Bratislava) and Stockholm.[[49]](#footnote-49) Yet by this time, most of the Buenos Aires audience would have known much of the music already, both through the semi-staged extracts performed at the theatre, and by other means, as recalled in the memoirs of Santiago Calzadilla: ‘when the first opera company arrived in Buenos Aires, much was already known and familiar here: through piano concerts, military bands and on the guitar, the most select parts and motifs of *Il barbiere*, *la Cenerentola*, *Il turco in Italia*, *La gazza ladra*, *L’italiana in Algeri* and various other compositions, whose overtures, arias, duos, trios, arrived for us on every instrument, preceded by European fame’.[[50]](#footnote-50)

The same process can be observed in many other locations, of course – no doubt including Pressburg and Stockholm – but in the case of Buenos Aires, the logistical challenges of sustaining a single opera company intact, and the wholehearted embrace of Rossini as a symbol of European civilization, seems to have created an almost obsessive focus on the composer, of a kind that would last for many years. The compellingly detailed reports on musical life that appeared in the English language weekly the *British Packet*, for instance, written by the paper’s editor Thomas George Love, demonstrate the continued presence of Rossini’s music well into the 1830s, despite the cessation of actual opera in the city after 1830. In March 1834, Love noted with some exasperation the repertoire of one of the local military bands, who played as they patrolled the town: ‘[they] have on several occasions enlivened the scene, playing selections from Rossini – it is always Rossini. The sweetest music will tire in time. Why do they not study Mozart, or another great composer?’[[51]](#footnote-51) Six years later, in April 1840, the reports remain the same: during Passion Week, the Guardia Argentina band ‘played some beautiful music from *Italiana*, *Cenerentola* etc., with good octave flute work’; at the new Victoria Theatre (which had opened in 1838), there were excerpts during the same period from, once again, *La gazza ladra*, *Il turco*, *L’italiana*, *Cenerentola*, and so on.[[52]](#footnote-52)

On stage, no opera ever quite rivaled the success of *Il barbiere* [see Table 2], but some came close. *L’inganno felice* appeared before the end of 1825, and *La Cenerentola* in April 1826; both remained popular over the following years,[[53]](#footnote-53) as did *L’italiana* (premiered on 22 May 1826), though never to the same extent as in Rio. Love communicated the Brazilian enthusiasm for this work to his readers, having received pamphlets on Barbieri and Fasciotti, and observed – in the context of the ongoing Argentine-Brazilian war – that ‘we do not covet these Rio songstresses: they are welcome to enchant the Imperialists … We have a strong presentiment that Buenos Ayres will, at no distant day, o’ertop their Brazilian rivals in more important things than music’.[[54]](#footnote-54)

The following year, 1827, saw the arrival of *Otello*, with Rosquellas performing the title role to great acclaim. The reviewer in the *Crónica política y literaria* (a paper co-edited by the Italian exile Pietro de Angelis) announced that the performance would serve to ‘spread the taste for learned and poetic music in this country’, before adding, in good Carpanian style, that the sort of beauties on offer in the piece appealed to all hearts: ‘so it is that the accents of Rossini dominate today in the entire civilized world; in military reviews, as in the Sistine chapel, in dances and temples, in popular songs, and in the magnificent theatres of Naples, Milan, Paris and London’.[[55]](#footnote-55) And Buenos Aires, by implication, could now be added to the list. A letter printed in the next day’s issue underlined the fact, pointing out that the opera had been reorchestrated by none other than Esnaola, despite his never having heard the original piece, and in a way that the correspondent suggested would have pleased Rossini himself.[[56]](#footnote-56) The sort of activity that in European contexts served simply as a convenient way to bypass copyright restrictions, here became celebrated as a symbolic Italo-Argentine joint enterprise (and in a way that makes the actual sound of these performances still harder to recapture).

In Buenos Aires, as in Rio, the final years of the decade saw a rapid expansion in numbers of press reviews, as well as a greater engagement with European discussions on the composer,[[57]](#footnote-57) and a first encounter with diva rivalry. After the arrival of *Tancredi* in May 1828 – which led one reviewer to break into poetry in praise of Angelita Tanni’s performance as Amenaide – and of *La gazza ladra* later the same year, the opening months of 1829 brought no new premieres.[[58]](#footnote-58) Then in August, Thomas Love excitedly announced that ‘our correspondent at Montevideo tells us that two Italian companies of singers have arrived there, destined to this place. The first consists of Señor Pizzoni, Señoras Schironi and Cavacaglia [sic]. It is said that the two ladies warble most *heavenly*, and that our favourite, Angelita Tanni, must “look out”’.[[59]](#footnote-59) Two weeks later, he provided an update, claiming that ‘the operatic corps from Montevideo are hourly expected’, and that he had received a letter reporting that ‘we shall be delighted with Señora Caravaglia in the character of Tancred, and the heroic manner in which she draws her sword and sings “Al campo, al campo”’.[[60]](#footnote-60)

This was the same Caravaglia whose planned performance of *Semiramide* had been declared bad for public health in Rio; understandably, given her treatment there, she had teamed up with a group of other singers in search of more welcoming venues. By September, their arrival was still hailed as imminent, but it wasn’t until October that the new troupe finally made it over the Río de la Plata from Montevideo; on the 17th Caravaglia and Schieroni were observed at a performance of *Tancredi*. Both wore crimson dresses, and sat in boxes close to the action; according to Love, ‘their presence had great effect upon their rivals on the stage’.[[61]](#footnote-61)

The evening in question marked the fourth performance in a run of *Tancredi*s, with Angelita Tanni’s castrato brother, Marcelo, in the title role, also newly arrived from Rio. The stage was therefore set for a new competition to rival that between Fasciotti and Barbieri. The two sides were even similarly constituted, with Angelita Tanni in Fasciotti’s role as a known (and loved) quantity, together with a castrato sibling with a voice both thrilling yet of a different era; Schieroni stood in for Barbieri: more recently arrived from Europe, and with a stronger operatic pedigree. The new troupe’s choice of opening work was *L’italiana*, which took place on 28 October 1829, and marked, in Love’s words ‘an epoch in the theatrical history of the city’; the Tanni siblings sat together in a box to witness the event.[[62]](#footnote-62) Love’s comparison of the two sopranos, meanwhile, was revealing: Schieroni was well drilled, astonishing, powerful; Tanni was expressive and sweet, and deserved the loyalty of the audience for her years of service. She also deserved the loyalty of her fellow singers, yet Michele Vaccani – brought down from Rio by Rosquellas in 1823 – quickly defected to the other side, leaving her company without a baritone.

In response, the Tannis offered the local premiere of *Aureliano in Palmira*, though without repeating its Rio success (‘tedious in the extreme’, in Love’s verdict); it lasted only three performances.[[63]](#footnote-63) *Tancredi*, too, remained just about manageable, but the troupe returned to evenings of extracts as well. Schieroni’s company, meanwhile, found much less success with *Il barbiere* than they had with *L’italiana*, at least in part because they could not wipe away memories of the performances that had become so cherished over the previous years. And so a rivalry that Love hyped as ‘more determined’ than that of the Montagus and Capulets, and destined to give ‘more spirit to the scene’, instead quickly reached a stalemate. By mid-December, he was reporting plans by Angelita Tanni to head for Rio, or even for Italy, and his own call for a coalition of the two companies went unanswered; instead, the operas carried on from both sides, with *Gazza ladra* from Schieroni and co., and *Otello*, with the assistance of Rosquellas, from the Tannis. But within weeks, the newcomers had left, bound for Chile; the Tanni family had headed for Montevideo; Vacani went back to Rio. ‘To the Opera we must bid a long farewell’, Love wrote.[[64]](#footnote-64)

As indicated above, Rossini’s music would continue to be played and sung at the theatre (including, in 1831, by the seven-year-old son of Rosquellas) and by bands in the streets, to the exclusion of most other repertoire; when the first surviving Buenos Airean music journal appeared in 1837, the composer’s lithograph duly appeared.[[65]](#footnote-65) For the time being, then, the Stendhalian sentiments expressed in *El Lucero* in the golden glow of September 1829 could still ring true, even in the absence of actual operas: ‘no other flag is followed than that of Rossini, whose triumphs are greater and more lasting than those of Napoleon himself … the swan of Pesaro, by the sole force of his genius, reigns despotically, and receives the homage of the most distant peoples’.[[66]](#footnote-66)

*Montevideo*

In October 1823, the papal legate, Giovanni Muzi, set sail from Genoa to Santiago de Chile, in a bid to define a new relationship between the Holy See and the newly independent republics of South America. Ejected from Buenos Aires by Rivadavia, accused of fomenting revolt, he then ran into problems in Chile over ecclesiastical appointments, and sailed back to Europe at the end of 1824. On his way, he stopped over in Montevideo, and three days after his arrival, on 27 December, a dinner was given in his honour. During the meal, he was entertained by Italian performers from Montevideo and Buenos Aires, led by none other than Michele Vaccani, who sang Paesiello’s ‘Nel cor più non mi sento’, and Rossini’s ‘Di tanti palpiti’, from *Tancredi*.

And so Rossini arrived in Uruguay, to entertain the papal party (including, as it happens, the future Pope Pio IX). Or rather Rossini arrived in the Cisplatina, at that point still a province of Brazil; independence would only be declared the following year, and not sealed until 1828, with the brokering of an end to the war between Brazil and Argentina that had added a frisson to Love’s comparisons between the operatic fare in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro. Given this troubled history, it is perhaps no surprise that no further mention of a Rossinian performance in Montevideo appears before July 1827, when a concert included the overture to *Il barbiere*, and then nothing more until January 1829, with a cavatina from *L’italiana* sung after a melodrama at the small and ramshackle Casa de Comedias, by the Spanish actor Domingo Moreno.[[67]](#footnote-67)

From this point on, however, the story gets both more lively, and more familiar. That same January, the Rio-based Tannis arrived in Montevideo, and Angelita came from Buenos Aires to meet them; they took the opportunity to give a concert of highlights from *Il barbiere* before leaving. By August, the two troupes mentioned by Love had also appeared, one made up of the Forestis, a husband and wife team of tenor and soprano, plus baritone Giacomo Bettali; the other comprising the tenor Agostino Mirò and the baritone Domenico Pizzoni, in addition to Schieroni and Caravaglia. Together they introduced the Montevidean audience to a typical range of items in two concerts in August, and another in October (selections from *L’italiana*, *Tancredi*, *Il barbiere*, *Cenerentola* etc.).[[68]](#footnote-68) Aside from the odd performance of a Rossini overture, that covers everything before 1830: the year that would be so significant for the country’s operatic history that the great Uruguayan musicologist Lauro Ayestarán would devote a whole book to it.[[69]](#footnote-69)

Much of the excitement of 1830 came through the presence, once again, of the Tannis, but it began with a ‘miscelánea lírico-dramatica’ on 13 February, from the Schieroni troupe en route to Chile, now with Bettali added to their number. Once they were safely out of the way, the Tannis teamed up with Signor Foresti, and after another concert of extracts (including a duo from *Semiramide* sung by Angelita and Marcelo Tanni), the first complete opera to be staged in the city appeared on 14 May: *L’inganno felice*. Over the next few months, there would also be also premieres of *Aureliano* (18 June), Pavesi’s 1809 one-act *Il Trionfo delle Belle* (8 July), *Tancredi* (20 September) and *Otello*, again assisted by Rosquellas (25 October); these were interspersed with continued variety concerts.

As in Buenos Aires, some critics hailed the arrival of Rossini’s operas in the city as an affirmation of modern, post-independence good taste, of a sort that challenged the continued presence of the Spanish-language musical skits, the tonadillas, that had previously rounded off theatrical evenings.[[70]](#footnote-70) Attempts to tie Rossini’s works to the fervently patriotic spirit of the new country also surfaced in other ways. The concert by the Schieroni troupe in October 1829, for instance, was dedicated to ‘the valiant Orientals [i.e. Uruguayans] wounded or killed in liberating this state’, with all proceeds going to the widows of the dead; when *Tancredi* appeared with the Tannis the following September, it was advertised with the transparently heroic subtitle of ‘Libertador de su Patria’. Meanwhile, the late start of little Uruguay onto the operatic scene (as well as into full nationhood) led smoothly into a series of seasons that would continue for several years beyond the cessation of opera in both Brazil and Argentina for the duration of the 1830s, much to the irritation of Thomas Love: ‘Buenos Aires with its one hundred thousand inhabitants must perforce yield the musical palm to Montevideo and its twenty odd thousand’.[[71]](#footnote-71)

This feat was achieved in the first place through the presence of the Tannis, who continued to perform into 1831, giving local premieres of *Il barbiere* and *L’italiana* (as well as Puccita’s *La caccia di Enrico IV*). At that point, Angelita left for Rio, but there was only a brief hiatus before the arrival of a new prima donna, Giustina Piacentini, with her sister Elisa (Vaccani’s daughter-in-law) and others. By September 1831, as a result, the premieres had resumed: *Cenerentola* (September), *Il turco in Italia* (October, most probably in its first full South American performance), *Matilde di Shabran* (February 1833; though listed by Ayestarán as 25 May 1834) and *La gazza ladra* (October 1835) [see Table 3].

There were non-Rossinian works as well: Generali’s single-act *Adelina* (1831), Mercadante’s *Elisa e Claudio* (1833), Paer’s *Agnese*, Marcos Portugal’s *O Sapateiro* (both 1834), and Pacini’s *La schiava in Bagdad* (1835). And some of these took their places firmly in the new repertoire, though they offered no serious challenge to Rossini’s dominance, any more than had alternative repertoire elsewhere. As time went on, however, bits of non-Rossinian music began to surface that created more of an impression. In June 1833, for instance, the Piacentini sisters set a terzetto from *Ricciardo e Zoraide* and the final rondò from *Cenerentola* against the equivalent finale from Bellini’s *Il pirata*, and a duet from his *I Capuleti*. The following year, an aria (unnamed) by Donizetti appears, and in December 1836, a cavatina from Donizetti’s *Parisina* and an aria from Bellini’s *Norma* made up the only operatic items for one programme. The list continues: selections from *Lucia* and *La straniera* in 1837, followed, a week later, by variations on the cabaletta theme from Gualtiero’s Act 2 aria in *Il pirata*, ‘Tu vedrai la sventurata’, by an Italian violinist passing through the city. More Donizetti, with Pacini, in June 1838; more still the following November, along with Bellini (a duo from *Norma*), and the intriguingly hybrid ‘Duo with chorus from the opera *L’assedio di Corinto*’, ‘the first movement composed by Maestro Rossini, and the allegro by Signor Donizetti’.[[72]](#footnote-72)

Such scattered fragments might not appear to add up to anything much, from a European perspective; nor are they especially surprising, given the continued transport of music (and some musicians) across the Atlantic through the decade. In the Uruguayan context, however, and even in the wider context of South America, these marked the first real challenge to Rossini’s long despotic reign (to borrow the description of *El Lucero*).

The new pieces were almost always introduced by the adored Giustina, often for a benefit performance, and marked a change of musical atmosphere noted in contemporary criticism, as can be seen from this tribute from December 1838:

To interpret the ineffable arias of Bellini and Donizetti exclusively with the voice is not a feat of extraordinary ability. But to translate the magic of the music by the magic of gesture, to communicate to the eye, with the features, the magic that is communicated to the ears by the voice, to flood all the senses with feelings of sweetness and harmony, to sing with the eyes and for the eyes, so to say, to send out smiles of harmony, to make melody well up from the pores is, without doubt, a talent reserved for the inestimable Piaccentini.[[73]](#footnote-73)

A few months earlier, an attempt in an article in Buenos Aires to argue that Bellini had been unable to surpass the genius of Rossini, had been answered from Montevideo by the argument that it was Rossini whose time, like that of Napoleon, had now passed.[[74]](#footnote-74) A reviewer in early 1839 agreed, observing that Rossini was no longer listened to with the same attention as his successors. ‘Rossini becomes tired as the sun becomes tired, as the sky becomes tired, as all the great beauties that we seen many times become tired. It would therefore be desirable for our lyric company to choose the light novelties of Rossini’s successors over the great beauties admired on so many occasions by the glorious author of the *Barbiere di Siviglia*’.[[75]](#footnote-75)

\*\*\*

Rossini’s music did not disappear from these three locations at the end of the 1830s.[[76]](#footnote-76) But to reach the moment when new repertoire poses a challenge (even if – at this point – the new repertoire is more written about than performed), is to take a small and necessary step to join the history of opera in South America to the wider operatic narratives of the period. Nevertheless, I remain wary of moving too smoothly from the specific case study to the level of global generality. After all, almost every detail outlined here invites more questions – or, to reiterate Loewenberg’s phrase, offers no more than ‘safe ground on which to build’. Further exploration of this ground might lead towards investigation of sources, or performance practice; contextual meanings, or musical influence. And in all cases, the nature of such investigation would vary according to how broad a conception of Rossinian opera we wish to embrace.

The valuable and fragile collection of 19th-century Rossini scores, mostly in manuscript, retained at the Biblioteca Alberto Nepomuceno in Rio, for instance, offers one route to develop ideas about the composer’s history in the city, supplemented by occasional printed librettos that have survived elsewhere.[[77]](#footnote-77) Just as revelatory, though, for appreciating the impact of this music, are the manuscripts collected in Montevideo by Lauro Ayestarán of dances for guitar on Rossinian melodies; or the beautifully presented selections of extracts compiled in the 1830s for the daughter of the Argentinian dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas, alongside bits of Bellini, Donizetti, and others, now preserved at the Museo Histórico Nacional in Buenos Aires.[[78]](#footnote-78)

In similar fashion, material in reviews and travel accounts touches frequently on matters of orchestral performance, vocal delivery, or staging, in a way only hinted at here, yet just as often spills over into much less straightforwardly technical areas. Take an advertisement in the *Diario do Rio de Janeiro* in early 1822, announcing that a performance of *Adelina* by Pietro Generali (listed here as Rossini’s teacher, no doubt to boost his stock) would be followed by an opera pantomime given in brand new costumes by the company of grotesques, with music by Rossini;[[79]](#footnote-79) or the common yet bewildering juxtaposition, also in Rio, of *L’italiana* with African-influenced dances, in a theatre at the heart of a slave-owning society preoccupied by the rhetoric of European civilization.[[80]](#footnote-80)

All such fragments resist easy understanding, and all return us once more to a version of the question with which I opened: what should we do with this kind of material – the kind revealed by paying attention to the spread of opera to unfamiliar locations? As ever, multiple possible answers spring to mind, all happily tending in different directions. But with every one of them, Rossini becomes more integrated within the history of South American musical culture, while South American musical culture lays claim to its part in the history (the real history?) of Rossini; a history, one might begin to suspect, that remains as incomplete for Europe as it is for anywhere else.

1. ALFRED LOEWENBGERG, *Annals of Opera: 1597-1940*, Cambridge, Heffer 1943, p. vii. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In this particular case, the revival was not a great success, at least according to the critic of “The Spectator” (1 February 1840, p. 111), who described it as ‘an adaptation of a forgotten opera … whose resuscitation was attempted by galvanic process, but certainly not with electric effect’. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Some of the answers in this instance can be found in HENRY KMEN, *Music in New Orleans: the Formative Years, 1791-1841*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press 1966. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This is not to ignore the existing scholarship on opera in both North and South America (footnoted elsewhere in this article); the coverage provided by Loewenberg nevertheless remains outside the standard narratives of 19th-century opera, with their focus on famous composers and works. For a recent exception, see DANIEL SNOWMAN, *The Gilded Stage: A Social History of Opera*, London, Atlantic Books 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. GIUSEPPE CARPANI, *Intorno all musica di Gioachino ROSSINI*, “Biblioteca italiana”, XXVII, June 1822, pp. 302-3; reprinted as Letter VII in CARPANI, *Le Rossiniane*, Padova, Minerva 1824, pp. 142-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Loewenberg omits to mention Calcutta, but *L’italiana* was staged at the Chowringhee Theatre in January 1834. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. On Rossini elsewhere in the Americas, see in particular KATHERINE K. PRESTON, *Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825-60*, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press 1993; JOHN DIZIKES, *Opera in America: A Cultural History*, New Haven, Yale University Press 1993; JAMES RADOMSKI, *Manuel García (1775-1832)*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2000; JOEL ALMAZÁN ORHUELA, *La recepción musical de las óperas de Gioachino Rossini en la ciudad de México (1821-1831)*, “Heterofonía” 129, July-December 2003, pp. 49-65; EUGENIO PEREIRA SALAS, *Los orígenes del arte musical en Chile*, Santiago, Imprenta Universitaria 1941; LUIS MERINO MONTERO, *La sociedad filarmónica de 1826 y los inicios de la actividad de conciertos públicos en la sociedad civil de Chile hacia 1830*, “Revista musical chilena” LX (2006), pp. 5-27; JUAN CARLOS ESTENSSORO, *Música y sociedad coloniales: Lima 1680-1830*, Lima, Colmillo Blanco 1989. In addition, a chronicle of operatic performances given in 19th-century Philadelphia (including Rossini) is maintained at <http://frankhamilton.org/ph/index.html> (accessed 02.iv.12). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The foundational documentary studies for my three locations (some more reliable than others) are AYRES DE ANDRADE, *Francisco Manuel da Silva e seu tempo, 1808-65: uma fase do passado musical do Rio de Janeiro à luz de novos documentos*, 2 vols., Rio de Janeiro, Tempo Brasileiro 1967; MARIANO G. BOSCH, *Historia de la Ópera en Buenos Aires: Origen del canto i la música*, Buenos Aires, El Comercio 1905;VICENTE GESUALDO, *Historia de la música en la Argentina*, 2nd ed., 3 vols., Buenos Aires, Libros de Hispanoamérica 1978; and LAURO AYESTARÁN, *La Música en el Uruguay*, Montevideo, Servicio Oficial de Difusión Radio Eléctrica, 1953; on Argentina, see also JOHN ROSSELLI: *The Opera Business and the Italian Immigrant Community in Latin America 1820-1930: The Example of Buenos Aires*, “Past and Present” 127 (1990), pp. 155-182. Other topical literature is mentioned in the relevant sections below. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See RICHARD TARUSKIN, *Speed Bumps*, “19th-Century Music”, XXIX, pp. 185-207; Taruskin defines the “Realist position” as one that “insists on viewing philosophy, science, and the arts as being within, rather than above, ‘the reality of worldly activities’” (p. 189). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. THEODOR VON LEITHOLD, *Meine Ausflucht nach Brasilien oder Reise von Berlin nach Rio de Janeiro und dort zurück*, Berlin, 1820; L. VON RANGO, *Tagebuch meiner Reise nach Rio de Janeiro in Brasilien, und Zurück, in den Jahren 1819 und 1820*, Leipzig, 1821. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Another German traveler to Brazil during the 1820s, Joseph von Weech, estimated that the boxes at the theatre seated 500, and the parterre 700; he adds that there would be room for 2,500 people, but that the heat would make this unbearable. J. FRIEDRICH V. WEECH, *Reise über England und Portugal nach Brasilien und den vereinigten Staaten des la Plata Stromes während den Jahren 1823 bis 1827*, 3 vols., Munich, Fr. X. Auer 1831, I, pp. 351-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This is several years earlier than suggested by Loewenberg, who places the Rio premiere in January 1826 (the performance given for the opening of the new theatre, as mentioned below). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For the operatic context into which this performance arrived, see ANDRADE, *Francisco Manuel da Silva*; CRISTINA MAGALDI, *Music in Imperial Rio de Janeiro: European Culture in a Tropical Milieu*, Lanham, MD, Scarecrow Press 2004;LUÍS ANTÔNIO GIRON, *Minoridade Crítica: A Ópera e o Teatro nos folhetins da corte*, *Rio de Janeiro, Ediouro 2004*;LINO DE ALMEIDA CARDOSO, *O Som e O Soberano: uma história da depressão musical carioca pós-Abdicação (1831-1843) e de seus antecedents*, PhD dissertation, University of São Paulo, 2006;ROGERIO BUDASZ, *Teatro e música na América Portuguesa: convenções, repertório, raça, gênero e poder*, Curitiba, DeArtes UFPR 2008; ANDRÉ CARDOSO, *A Música na corte de D. João VI, 1808-1821*, São Paulo, Martins Fontes 2008; MAURÍCIO MONTEIRO, *A Construção do Gosto: Música e Sociedade na Corte do Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1821*, Rio de Janeiro, Atelîe Editorial 2008;and ALBERTO JOSÉ VIEIRA PACHECO, *Castrati e outros virtuoses: a prática vocal carioca sob influência da corte de D. João VI*, São Paulo, Annablume 2009. On the specific subject of Rossini in Brazil, see PAULO MUGAYAR KÜHL, *A chegada das óperas de Rossini no Rio de Janeiro*, “Rotunda” IV (2006), pp. 59-70; and FERNANDO SANTOS BERÇOT, *A opera de Rossini na Corte do Rio de Janeiro (1819-1831),* B. A. dissertation, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. VON LEITHOLD, *Meine Ausflucht nach Brasilien*, p. 25; VON RANGO, *Tagebuch*, p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. VON LEITHOLD, *Meine Ausflucht nach Brasilien*, p. 25; there seems to be no further information available on Madame Sabini, beyond the fact that von Leithold describes her as ‘a small, pretty, lively woman with fiery eyes, similar to those of Madame Catalani’. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The detailed annotated chronology by Paulo Mugayar Kühl of all known operatic performances in Rio between the arrival of the Portuguese court and 1827, is available at <www.iar.unicamp.br/cepab/opera/cronologia.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. As Mugayar Kühl points out (*Cronología*, p. 20), Ayres de Andrade is the only source for this performance, and lists the date twice at different points, once in November and once in December 1821. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. An opera simply listed as *Adelaida*, without attribution,was listed in the “Diario do Governo” on 11 January 1823. *Otello* was advertised in the “Diario do Rio de Janeiro” on 10 and 12 July 1827, to take place on 12 July, but a comment in “L’Echo de l’Amérique du Sud” (18 July 1827) casts doubt over whether the performance ever took place: “The Administration has been forced to abandon staging *Otello*, for lack of a serious tenor.” A further work is listed in the “Diario do Rio de Janeiro” on 23 September 1828 as a one-act farce, entitled *Adina ou O Duque de Granada*. This has been proposed as a version of Rossini’s *Adina, o Il califfo di Bagdad*; if true, the performances here and in Montevideo in 1839 would be the only ones outside Lisbon between the work’s 1826 premiere and its revival in 1963 (but see Table 3 for arguments against this attribution). Finally, a list of upcoming operas that appeared in the “Diario do Rio de Janeiro” on 27 July 1831 lists *Il turco in Italia* (as well as *Otello*)but it seems likely that neither was ever performed. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. SCHLICHTHORST, *Rio de Janeiro wie es ist. Beiträge zur Tages- und Sitten-Geschichte der Haupstadt von Brasilien*, Hanover, Im Verlage der Hahn’schen Hofbuchhandlung 1829, p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See MUGAYAR KÜHL, *Cronología*. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. VON WEECH, *Reise*,p. 353. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. “L’Indépendant”, 3 May 1827, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. On this subject, see GIRON, *Minoridade crítica* [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. “Diario do Rio de Janeiro”, 20 July 1821, p. 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. “O Spectador Brasileiro”, 9 May 1827, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. “L’Indépendant”, 2 June 1827, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. “Gaceta do Brasil”, 21 Nov 1827, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. PACHECO, *Castrati e outros virtuoses*, pp. 78-114; he also lists two further singers mentioned by Schlichthorst as singing at the opera, about whom no more is known. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. LOEWENBERG, *Annals*, p. 317; Herbert Weinstock mentions that the work reached ‘about thirty’ Italian theatres (*Rossini: A Biography*, New York, A. A. Knopf 1968, p. 494), but not many outside Italy. Typically, Velluti’s role was taken by a woman; this was also the case in Lisbon (see DAVID CRANMER, *Opera in Portugal, 1793-1828: A study in repertoire and its spread*, PhD dissertation, 2 vols., University of London 1997), II, p. 320). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. “L’Echo de l’Amérique du Sud”, 18 July 1827, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See AYRES DE ANDRADE, Vol. 2, p. 165; the quotation (unsourced) comes from the Brazilian painter Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See AYRES DE ANDRADE, Vol. 2, p. 166; it is not clear which part he took, though in 1830, the two castrato Tanni brothers took the roles of Rodrigo and Iago (see AYESTARÁN, *La Música en el Uruguay*, p. 203). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. It is easy enough to catch here the unmistakable echo of Stendhal’s well-known (and fictitious) anecdote about Velluti embellishing *Aureliano* to such an extent that Rossini could no longer recognize his own music; an act which – Stendhal claims – led the composer to write out all his ornamentation (see Stendhal, *Vie de Rossini*, Paris, August Boulland 1824, pp. 431-4). Yet the transfer of this accusation to Maria Teresa indicates the way that the criticism could take on a life of its own, rhetorically serving to separate singer from composer, and paving the way for a new approach. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. On her return to Europe, Barbieri in various locations in Italy, and in 1835 one journal described her in similar terms as ‘quella francese già da qualche tempo italianizzata’ (*Il censore universale* 52, July 1835, p. 206). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. VICTOR JACQUEMONT, *Letters from India*, London, Edward Churton 1834, 2 vols., I, pp. 40-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. To take a few at random: the “Jornal do Commercio”, 10 Nov 1828, p. 2, or 24 July 1829, p. 1; “Le Courrier du Brésil”, 18 Nov 1828, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. “Courrier du Brésil”, 4 October 1828, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. “Courrier du Brésil”, 30 Jan 1830, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. LUIZ HEITOR CORRÊA DE AZEVEDO, *150 Anos de Música no Brasil (1800-1950)*, Rio de Janeiro, Olympio 1956, p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. “Courrier du Brésil”, 18 July 1829, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. For an overview of musical life in Buenos Aires at this time, see GESUALDO, *Historia de la música*; BOSCH, *Historia de la Ópera*; CARLOS VEGA, *La música argentina (1810-1852)*, in *Historia de la nación argentina (desde los orígenes hasta la organización definitive en 1862)*, Buenos Aires, Librería “El Ateneo” editorial 1946, pp. 489-516; MELANIE PLESCH AND GERARDO V. HUSEBY, *La música desde el period colonial hasta fines del siglo XIX*, in *Arte, sociedad y política* [*Nueva Historia Argentina*, vol. 1], Buenos Aires, Editorial Sudamericana, 1999; HÉCTOR LUIS GOYENA, *Lírica a la luz de las velas: la opera en Buenos Aires entre 1821 y 1830*, “Música e Investigación” 12-13 (2003), pp. 15-164. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. On Esnaola, see CARLOS VEGA, *Juan Pedro Esnaola, “El primer gran músico argentino”*, “Revista del instituto de investigación musicological “Carlos Vega” 15 (1997), pp. 21-54; CARMEN GARCÍA MUÑOZ and GUILLERMO STAMPONI, *Juan Pedro Esnaola: su obra musical*, Buenos Aires, Editorial de la Universidad Católica Argentina, 2002; BERNARDO ILLARI, *Ética, estética, nación: las canciones de Juan Pedro Esnaola*, “Cuadernos de Múica Iberoamericana” 10 (2005), pp. 137-223. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. *Argos de Buenos Aires* 75, 5 October 1822. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. On Rosquellas, see the accounts (not always in agreement) of VICENTE GESUALDO, *Pablo Rosquellas y los orígenes de la ópera en Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, Artes en América 1962; and GUY BOURLIGUEUX, *Un musicien madrilène à travers le Nouveau Monde*, “Mélanges offerts à Paul Roche”, ed. N. Perera San Martin, Nantes, Presses de l’Université de Nantes 1992, pp. 183-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. ‘The Theatre, as an edifice, has nothing to boast. The exterior looks like a stable; but the interior is better than the outside promises’, [THOMAS LOVE], *A Five Years’ Residence in Buenos Ayres, During the Years 1820 to 1825: Containing Remarks on the Country and Inhabitants; and a visit to Colonia del Sacramento,* London, G. Hebert 1825, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. “El Centinela” 31, 2 March 1823. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. “El Centinela” 56, 17 August 1823. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The members of the family who came down to Buenos Aires consisted of five siblings: four singers – Angelita, Maria, Pasquale (Pascual) and Marcelo – and an instrumentalist, Francisco; all seem to have travelled back to Rio, except Angelita, before returning in 1829; another instrumentalist, Cristóvão Tanni, appears on an 1828 list of chapel musicians in Rio (see CARDOSO, *O Som e O Soberano*, p. 113). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. LOEWENBERG, *Annals*, p. 321. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. SANTIAGO CALZADILLA, *Las Beldades de mi tiempo*, Buenos Aires, Jacobo Peuser 1891, p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. “British Packet”, 15 March 1834. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. “British Packet”, 25 April 1840; by this time, other music had begun to challenge Rossini: see, for instance, the fascination with Bellini in the 1837 *Boletín Musical* (facsimile, ed. MELANIE PLESCH, La Plata, Asociación Amigos Archivo Histórico 2006); this was backed up by the arrival in Buenos Aires in 1839 of Giustina Piacentini who, in the words of Love in the “British Packet” on 29 June, ‘has brought before the Buenos Ayres public the beauties of other composers besides Rossini’; see below for Piacentini’s similar contribution to Montevidean musical life. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The appeal of *Cenerentola* seems to have come in part from a similarity emphasised between Don Magnifico, in all his absurdity, and a government minister. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. “British Packet”, 1 December 1827. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. “Crónica Politica y Literaria” 85, 24 August 1827; see also the similarly glowing review of the piece the following year in “El Tiempo” 15, 19 May 1828. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. “Crónica Politica y Literaria” 86, 25 August 1827 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. See, for example, the defence of Rossini against unnamed detractors, published in the “Diario Comercial”13, 10 September 1828. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. The poem appeared in *El Tiempo*, and is reprinted in NORMA LUCIA LISIO, *Divina Tani y el inicio de la ópera en Buenos Aires, 1824-1830*, Buenos Aires 1996, pp. 73-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. “British Packet”, 15 August 1829. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. “British Packet”, 29 August 1829. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. “British Packet”, 24 October 1829. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. “British Packet”, 31 October 1829. Schieroni played Isabella; Caravaglia’s debut would not take place until December. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. “British Packet”, 14 November 1829. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. “British Packet”, 17 April 1830. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. See PLESCH, ed., *Boletín musical*, p. 183; the journal, which ran for sixteen issues during the second half of 1837, also ran two articles about Rossini (‘Rossini y Bellini’, and ‘Viage [sic] de Rossini a Alemania’), reprinted from French sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. “El Lucero” 1, 7 September 1829. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. See AYESTARÁN, *La Música en el Uruguay*, p. 195.A contemporary description of the Casa de Comedias appears in L. BOUTCHER J. HALLORAN, *Rescued Fragments of Cabin Memorandums*, Plymouth, W. Curtis 1826: ‘the theatre, which is very small, has a most miserable appearance outside; and I am told its interior is no better, being whitewashed only, and unceiled: the roof is supported by two large columns, which rise from the centre of the pit, and greatly obstruct the view of the stage: the pit is without benches, and the men assemble there, smoking their cigars; the boxes have no seats, so that each lady has her chair brought by a servant.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. AYESTARÁN, *La Música en el Uruguay*, pp. 304-5; see also the review in “Las Cuestiones” 6, 8 August 1829, which expresses a clear preference for Schieroni’s troupe over the Forestis. Ayestarán omits the October concert, which is listed in “El Universal” 94, 8 October 1829. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. AYESTARÁN, *Crónica de una temporada musical en el Montevideo en 1830*, Montevideo, Ediciones Ceibo 1943. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. On this subject see, for instance, the letter from “Los aficionados” to “La Gaceta” 74, 9 July 1829; this echoes sentiments expressed in the papers of Buenos Aires, dating back to the early part of the decade. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. “British Packet”, 16 July 1831. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Details of all these performances are listed in AYESTARÁN, *La Música en el Uruguay*, Appendix 2, pp. 303-405. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. “El Nacional”, 10 December 1838. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. The first article, by Juan Battista Alberdi, and entitled *Bellini a la faz de Rossini*, appeared in “La Moda” on 3 March 1838; the response by Alberdi’s friend Miguel Cané, with the same title, was printed in the Montevidean paper “El Iniciador” on 1 August 1838. On the context for the two articles, see OLSEN A. GHIRARDI, *La Generación del ’37 en el Río de la Plata*, Córdoba, Academia Nacional de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales de Córdoba 2004; available from <http://www.acaderc.org.ar/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. “El Nacional”, 25 February 1839. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Much as in Europe, the number of works, and the frequency of performances decreased, but pieces such as *Il barbiere*, *L’italiana* and *Semiramide* continued to appear through the 1850s and probably beyond. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. The holdings of the Alberto Nepomuceno library can be searched at <www.minerva.ufrj.br>; see also PHILIP GOSSETT, *Manuscript Collections of Italian Opera*, in Maria Alice Volpe, ed., *Atualidade da Ópera: Série Simpósio Internacional de Musicologia da UFRJ*, Rio de Janeiro, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2012, pp.19-30. In addition, a libretto of the 1827 Buenos Aires *Otello* survives in the Biblioteca Nacional de la República Argentina. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Parts of Ayestarán’s collection are reproduced in *La Música en el Uruguay*; the original materials, including guitar scores of ovtures and arias as well as dance arrangements, are in the Library of Congress, Washington DC; the catalogue can be found at <http://memory.loc.gov/service/music/eadxmlmusic/eadpdfmusic/2003/mu003003.pdf> (accessed 9 April 2012). The Buenos Aires collection is outlined in MELANIE PLESCH, *La música en el museo histórico nacional*, *Actas de las VIII jornadas argentinas de Musicología y VII Conferencia Annual de la AAM*, Buenos Aires, Insituto Nacional de Musicología “Carlos Vega” 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. “Diario do Rio de Janeiro”, 12 January 1822, p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. A letter to the *Gazeta do Brasil* on 6 October 1827 suggested that these dances should be incorporated into the opera itself: ‘what could be more natural than Mustafa, in the company of the lovely Italian girl, to call for his slaves to give her a dance divertimento?’ Quoted in BERÇOT, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)